

Baptist Academy ²² Stokes Croft Bristol

*The Dangerous Deceitfulness of Sin
Consider'd
as a Motive to Mutual Exhortation:*

IN A
S E R M O N

Preach'd to the
Religious Society

Encouraging the
Evening-Lecture

In *Lime-street*, Feb. 6. 170⁶.

By DANIEL WILCOX.

publish'd at the Request of the said Society.

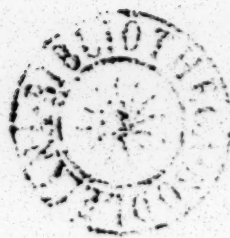
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TO THE
Worthy Persons,
THE
MEMBERS
OF THE
SOCIETY,

And all that belong to the Evening-
Lecture in *Lime-street*.

Gentlemen,

YOU know the Difficulty thro' which the following Discourse appears in the World, which I assure you was not Feigned, but Real, and had been insuperable to any thing but your Profession that it was of Use to several of you in the Hearing, and the Reason given me to hope that it might be more so to your selves and others from the Press. 'Tis to these Considerations I now yield.

And if the Interest of Christ and Souls be serv'd, Faith and Holiness encouraged, and Perseverance in Both; the Dangerous Deceitfulness of Sin disappointed, and the Serious Reader's Salvation further'd and secur'd, together with my own, &c. The Satisfaction of this now, and the View and Hope of a comfortable Account at last, will render Self-denial, as to all other Regards wherein I may suffer, no Difficult Task.

As

The EPISTLE.

As I was to Preach on the Day of your Anniversary Meeting, when You were more especially to be spoken to as a Religious Society, united to the Highest Purposes and Ends: The Text contains Your Proper Duty and Work, under the most Powerfull Motive to it, which I have endeavoured to urge, to keep up Your Noted Zeal for God, Your affectionate Concern for the Good of each other, and the strictest Watchfulness as to Your selves, particularly considered as Younger Persons, that You may be Safe.

You have the Sermon with little Alteration as to what was deliver'd from the Pulpit, tho' some Enlargement was necessary in the Application, which the Straits of Time would not then allow. Be faithful in following the Directions given, and the Lord accompany all with his Blessing.

Gentlemen,

I cannot conclude, without taking this Occasion to make my Publick Thankful Acknowledgements to you, for the great Respect you lately put upon me, in choosing me to serve Your Souls in the Work of the Gospel, and that in the Freest most obliging Manner, without the Solicitation of Friends, or any private undue Management whatsoever, &c. The Sense of this peculiarly engages me to You, and will encourage me to hold on in Your Service with the greatest Chearfulness, in Hope that my Labours in a Relation that seems to be brought about by the Special Direction of Providence, will be attended with Special Influences of the Spirit of Grace, to the Glory of God, the Honour of Christ and his Gospel, the Good of many Souls, and so to our Mutual Satisfaction and Comfort now, and Blessedness, Joy and Praise for Ever. In this Hope I desire to be known,

Your Affectionate

Faithful Servant,

Daniel Wilcox.

The Dangerous Deceitfulness of Sin, &c.

HEBREWS III. 13.

But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened, through the deceitfulness of sin.

TIS plain, that *Presumption* and *Delay*, making bold with smaller Instances of Sin, and *deferring* Repentance, &c. are the Snares that prove fatal to the most that perish under the Gospel. This is the *Method of Destruction*, the way in which Satan is training Souls to Ruin: And what Reason is there to fear he is but too successful, especially among the *Younger Sort*? Being therefore to speak to you as a *Society of such*, you will not think it unseasonable to be warn'd of your Danger, and pointed to the Means that may be of use to your common Safety, for both which we have here a suitable Ground.

The General Scope of the Apostle, in this Chapter, is, to press the *Hebrews* to keep close to Christ, and persevere in the Faith, and Obedience of the Gospel. This he does upon *several Considerations*, particularly from the Sin and *Verf. 7.—11.* *bad Effects* of Obstinacy and Apostacy. For *this*, he brings the affecting Instance of the Provocation and Punishment of their *Fathers* in the *Wilderness*, and thereupon cautions them against the like. *Take heed Brethren, lest there be in* *Verf. 12.* *any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.* Beware that you do not prove rebellious and perverse, backslide and perish, as others have done. You had need watch and guard your Hearts and Spirits against the Workings of Corruption within, and Temptations without. *Abstain from all appearance of evil*; and let no Sin in smaller Beginnings, or under plausible Disguises, be securely indulg'd. 'Tis a Gradual departing from the Living God, in

which you know not where you shall stop, but may have your Hearts hardened from his fear, so as never to return. To prevent which he adds the Advice in the Text. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to day, lest any of you be hardened thro' the deceitfulness of sin.

In which Words we have,

First, A Duty enjoined; Viz. Mutual Exhortation. Exhort one another. Let every one, in his proper Place, do what he can for his Brother's Soul. Warn, Admonish, Entreat; use the most awakening Arguments, and press them with the warmest Affection, to restore the fallen, confirm the weak and wavering, and strengthen those that stand; to recover out of the Snare of the Devil, such as have begun to decline, and engage others that more closely adhere to Christ, always to do so, as ever they would prove their Interest in Him, or have a well-grounded Hope of being at last with Him. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.

We are now upon our *Trial* in a sinful World, liable to a Thousand Temptations on every side, and have the Danger encreas'd by our own Hearts; wherefore let careful Fear as to your selves, and affectionate Exhortation of one another, keep you watchful, lest any of you should miss, or seem to come short of the promised Everlasting Rest.

Hearken to Christ's Voice, resist not his Spirit, believe his Promises, fear his Threatnings, obey his Commands, follow his Example, continue in the Faith and Profession of his Name, and never turn from the Way of Holiness, without which none shall see God; and being bound for Heaven your selves, labour to carry as many as you can along with you. Exhort one another.

Secondly, The Manner of Performing the Duty mentioned, with Frequency and Urgency, Daily, while it is called to Day. Let none delay or silently suffer Sin on his Brother. Make hast to save him with Fear. Whatever is done must be done now, whilst the Day of Life and Grace is continued. The Blessed Opportunity may soon be

be over, when there will be no Room for Counsel, or it will be like to do no Good. And as your Danger is *common* and great, so let your Care and Watchfulness over each other be.

Thirdly, The *Motive* or Reason to enforce this. *Lest any of you be harden'd, thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin.* You can't too soon oppose it your selves, or warn others. There's no Safety in having any Thing to do with it. 'Tis all Deceit in its Appearance, Obduracy in the Practice, Destruction in the Issue. The Hazard is great of the least Indulgence, whatever the Pretence be: The Repetition may prove fatal: Wherefore, *Exhort one another daily, whilst it is called to Day: LEST ANY OF YOU BE HARDNED THRO' THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN.*

'Tis this *Last Clause* which I would now chiefly consider, under which I shall endeavour to shew,

- I. How Sin may be said to be *Deceitful*, very justly so.
- II. The *Prevalency* of that Deceitfulness by which it works.
- III. What *Hardness* it leads to.

IV. The Misery of their Case who are hardned in and by it: Which will make Way for a serious Application.

- I. How Sin may be said to be deceitful.

Sin here may admit of a *twofold* Consideration, as it respects the *External Practice*, the *vicious Object and Act*; or as referr'd to the *latent Body of Death*, indwelling Corruption, with its various Workings.

1st. As to the *External Object or Act* about it, Sin's *Deceitfulness* lies in appearing *what it is not*, and *Promising what it can never give*.

In its Native Blackness and Deformity, as a Violation of the Law of God, provoking his Wrath, and drawing after it an everlasting Hell; 'tis too frightful to be the *Object* of the Sinner's Choice.

This is not unknown to the Grand Destroyer, who therefore in tempting to Sin, endeavours to hide its Bitterness and Sting, and paint it with the fairest Colours, the more

Gen. 3. 6.

strongly to allure. Thus he *beguiled* unwary Eve, who ventures to eat of the *forbidden* Fruit, in Hope of *Impunity* and *Advantage*, upon the *Serpent's* Suggestion of *both*, even where God had threatned *Death*. When she saw that the Tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and her Husband with her; from whence our Misery springs. And 'tis under a like Delusion, that their Posterity are still ensnared.

Prov. 16, 25.

In this Sense, Sin, like the Father of it, may be said to be a *Liar from the beginning*. It allures with the specious Prospect of Riches, but robs us of our best Treasure; flatters with Hopes of Honour or Pleasure, but rewards with Disgrace and Torment; tempts with Liberty, but binds in Chains; makes fair Proposals of an Imaginary Felicity, but betrays to endless Destruction, unfeigned Misery. The Paths it would have us go, seem all strew'd with Flowers of Profit, Dignity or Delight; and hence appear *Right* and *Eligible* in the Sinner's Eyes, 'till the *End* prove 'em the *Ways of Death*.

Jer. 17. 9.

Jom. 1. 15.

But this is not all the Deceitfulness of Sin.

2dly. As referr'd to the *Latent* Body of Death, *indwelling Corruption*, who can tell the many Ways it has to deceive and destroy? *The Heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it?* Lust having conceived, is restless in its Motions, 'till it bring forth Sin, and that finished draws Death after it.

Its Deceitfulness here may be consider'd as to the Methods used in *enticing to*, or *confirming in* a Way of Wick- edness.

(1.) In *Enticing to it*:

See Dr. Owen
of indwelling
Sin, Chap. 8.

What Pains does the Sinner take to justify or extenuate the Evil he is bent upon? And by a deceitful Varnish to take off from its horrid Appearance, that it may give as little Disturbance to Conscience as possible. All Endeavours are used, not only to colour the *Object*, but to corrupt the Eye by a disguising Tincture, that the Sight of Things may not be according to *Truth*, but *Desire*.

To

To this End 'tis obvious to observe, how most Vices are accomodated with softer Names, whereby Sinners willingly impose upon themselves, and calling *Evil Good*, venture upon it without Hesitation or Concern; as if the disguised Poison would be the less deadly, because taken down under the Notion of a Cordial; or the infinitely Holy and Righteous God would be as easily deceiv'd as they.

If Sin must be called by its own Name, how many Pleas are ready, to lessen the Guilt, and make it seem as none? Excuses urg'd from the Person, Circumstances, Manner and Design of yielding, &c. to smoothe the Way and draw on the yet unpractic'd Mind.

The Devil seems modest in his first Temptations, and his inbred Correspondent soon takes the Hint, and pleads as Lot for Zoar, *Is it not a little one, and my Soul shall live?* Gen. 19 20. Or as Naaman's Servants to bring him to yield to the Prophet's Advice, *'Tis no great Matter is requir'd.* What if ^{2 Kings 5. 13} for once I take my Liberty in this or the other Instance, in compliance with youthful Inclinations, the Bent of my Nature, the Importunity and Example of others, or the unavoidable Temptations of my Place and State? What if I am overcome and yeild *so far*, whilst I stop short of that Excess which others run into? As if he that enters upon any Way of Wickedness was not as a Man going to wade a shelving Deep, where after a Step or two, he is in Danger of being beyond his Length, past Recovery, or one that will set himself a running down a Hill, unable easily to make a stand.

'Tis Natural for *One Sin* like some Colours, to dispose for *others*, to be more easily receiv'd, and with a deeper Dye. How great a Flame hath been kindled by a little Spark? The Divine Law requires *Universal Obedience*, that we abstain from *all Appearance* of Evil, and he that presumptuously offends in *one Point*, is said to be *guilty of all*, James 2 10. as he despises the Authority upon which every Command is founded, and is prepar'd to do it, as to all the rest. *The Wages of every Sin is Death*, which the least indulg'd and Rom. 6 23. allow'd.

allow'd, without Repentance, as *surely* leads to, as the *greatest*: And how poor Relief will it be in *Hell*, to think that I did not follow my Companions *thither* the shortest Way, or by *Equal Strides*, when I find my self in the same Place of Torment, as *truly* damn'd as they?

But whatever be the Consequence, any Thing is welcome that favours the Sinner's corrupt Inclinations, or would seem to palliate and excuse what he is bent to do. The *foolish Heart* is *darkened*, Objections slighted or broken thorow, Scruples conquer'd, Desire rais'd, the forbidden Fruit tasted, the Tempter gratify'd, the Soul ensnar'd, and like to be for ever lost. For,

(2.) Being once enticed into the *Broad Way*, Sin is no less *deceitful* to draw on, even to *final* Obduracy and Destruction.

To this End *false* Libertine Principles are admitted, or perverse Inferences drawn from *true* ones. The Scriptures wrested and abused, as to their merciful Discoveries, precious Promises, Instances of Grace abounding to the chiefest of Sinners, &c. and Arguments fetch'd from all, whereby such as come after encourage themselves to *walk in the way of their heart, and in the sight of their eyes*; to add Sin to Sin in confidence of Safety, 'till Death meet them in their destructive Career, and put an End to their Life and Hope together.

Eccles. 8. 11. *The Heart of the Children of Men is fully set in them to do evil*; and notwithstanding the modest Pretensions urg'd at first, having *once* drawn us to the Commission of Sin, because it was small, or as it had not been done by us before: It

* In a sense of will hence plead more strongly for repeated Acts, or *higher Degrees; because 'tis the same, or but little else than we have done already, or others before us, who yet have come off safe, and we may go as far, and escape, as well as they. Thus by a Wisdom from *Beneath*, deceitful Sin is training on to Destruction; and how sad is it to see so many following its Charms, securely going down to the Chambers of Death! Hence,

this, a Heathen could say, *Stultitars est nequitie modus*. Sen. 'Tis Folly for any to purpose to sin with this thought, I will do it with Moderation.

II. We

II. We are to consider the *Power* and *Prevalency* of that Deceitfulness that agrees to Sin.

In our Times, if ever, 'tis lamentably visible, considering the Light and Means enjoy'd, the Arguments used, the Methods taken by God and Man to reclaim a Licentious Age, reduce Sinners to their Wits, and make the necessary Change on Heart and Life, and the little Success or Fruit of all.

What therefore I shall say under this Head, shall be for Conviction as well as Proof, to awaken, shame and humble such as have been Instances of this, to prepare them for Recovery; and put others upon watching, that they may never be ensnar'd.

1. How strangely powerful is the Deceitfulness of Sin, as to *such* as *love* and *live* therein, *tho' they are told of its present deceit and destructive issue?* How little they will get by it, and what they will lose, and without a Timely Retreat, must for ever suffer. *He that sinneth against me,* Prov. 8. ult. (saith Wisdom, Personating Christ) *wrongeth his own Soul, all they that hate me love death.* Hate the Lord of Life and Glory! How amazing does it sound! And yet may he add, 'How plainly is it true of *all* that prefer their Sins before their Saviour, and shew it by refusing to turn from 'em and give up themselves to me, to be and live as my Redeemed Ones? Of *all* (and how great is their Number?) that will not hearken to my Voice, nor walk in my Ways, nor obey my Commands, nor renounce their Lusts, &c. for all the Arguments used in the Gospel? But by this their Rebellion against *me*, how do they wrong their *own* Souls! deprive them of that Happiness they are capable of, and which as the Purchase of my Blood, I offer to 'em; betray them to everlasting Misery, from which they are exhorted to flee, by forsaking *Sin*, as to its Love and Practice, which now only can prove their Ruin: But they think the Terms hard, and Death more eligible, and are resolv'd for Hell. Powerful Charm! that can make Men fond of Destruction, and hate their
best

best Friend, despise their Happiness, and court their Misery, and break thro' all Restraint thereto.

Phil. otimus.

'Tis an affecting Instance of Sin's Bewitching Power on *him*, who being advised by his Physicians to cease his Debauches, or he would lose his Sight; could readily reply, "*Valeat lumen amicum*. If I can't enjoy my Lusts and Eyesight too, as pleasant as it is, I am resolv'd to be blind. But how much more besotted do many prove themselves upon the same Account? When they have *Life* and *Death* set before them, Salvation and Damnation, and are told the way that leads to both, for the sake of a *base Lust* will turn their Backs upon Christ and Heaven, and madly leap into the Bottomless Pit.

If it be said 'tis not their Misery Sinners *formally* chuse, but the *present* Happiness or Satisfaction they are flatter'd with, and being wholly taken up in pursuit of these, forget or disregard the dreadful Consequence. Hence,

2. How *powerful* is the Deceit of Sin, *in that* it can persuade *so many*, who are made for *another World*, and passing to it, to seek for Happiness *where 'tis not to be found*; pursue a *Shadow* in the way to *Hell*, and for a short liv'd Pleasure, forget and run into Everlasting Torment? How strangely hath Sin befool'd the World, how low is Man debas'd thereby? That Man, a Creature of a Rational Nature, an Immortal Soul, capable, and design'd to look and live beyond the *Compass* of *Sense* and *Time*; should be *so far* become *like the Beasts that perish*, as to be wholly confin'd to present Enjoyments, ravel out his Days in Sin and Folly, and esteem that his Felicity, which will have an End; end so soon in a miserable Eternity.

Psal. 49. 12.

3. How *strangely* powerful is the Deceitfulness of sin, as to the *Numbers* over whom it *still* reigns, tho' *all* its Servants *sooner* or *later* confess the Delusion: That they miss'd of their vainly expected Satisfaction, and courted Real Misery, under a deceitful Appearance: That the Felicity promised was all Dream and Disappointment, and they had no Pleasure in it worthy the Rational Nature.

ture. That all its Delights are dreggy, superficial, vanishing, mix'd; at best but like the Book St. *John* was bid to eat; *sweet* for a little while in the *Mouth*, but *bitter* in the *Belly*. Rev. 10. 9.

This is the *General* Testimony of *such* as have tried to their Cost: And yet of how little Force is it with those that come after, to stop or turn them from the same Course?

For this I need not appeal to the Complaints of *such* as are gone down to the *Burning Lake*; which some are ready to question because they are not heard, nor any allow'd to come from thence. Tho' He that *knows* what they suffer, tells us of their *weeping* and *wailing*, and *gnashing of Teeth*, as sensible of the Deceitfulness of Sin, to their Eternal Sorrow, it being too late to redress their *Fatal* Mistake. They are *damn'd* for what once they delighted in, as others do after them: And could they return to Earth, with *flaming Tongues* would they tell their Fellow-Sinners of the dreadful *Place of Torment* they are going to, Groaning forth their real Sense of that Text, *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye*. Mat. 3, &c. Rom. 3. 13.

But tho' we cannot hear *their* Lamentations in *Hell*, there have been, and are *Multitudes* on *Earth*, *experimentally* to witness to the *Deceitfulness* of Sin. *Saints* having their Eyes open by Grace, *Sinners* on their Dying Beds awakned thro' Fear: *Both* reflect with deep Remorse, tho' not of the same Kind, on their former Ways.

The Apostle puts the Question to the *Converted Romans* with Reference to their former State, *What fruit had ye then in those things whereof you are now ashamed?* Rom. 6. 21. In the Time when you were wholly devoted to Sin, sought Satisfaction in an unrestrain'd indulging your Lusts, took the largest Liberty to gratify and please your Appetite and Senses, &c. Did it really yield the desired Fruit? Can you reflect with Comfort on what you got or laid up in your once-esteemed pleasant Days? Or rather, must you not speak out, and freely tell deluded Sinners who are *wearying* themselves in the *Greatness* of their *Way*, that what they
C are

are so much set upon, you have found an *Empty cheating Thing*: That you got nothing in the Days of your *Vanity*, but what now yields you *Vexation*, is matter of Shame and Sorrow in the bitter Remembrance.

And how frequent are the Complaints of Sinners to the same Purpose? When on a Dying-Bed reduc'd to their Senses, how do they cry out of Sin's Deceit and their own Folly? "O the delusive Happiness I have been pursuing! O the cheap Damnation of my Soul! For what a meer nothing have I spent my Time, wasted my Body, sold Heaven, and ventur'd upon an Everlasting Hell, to which I am now going! How little have I enjoy'd, and what now remains of all that I was flatter'd with! But notwithstanding this, how *easily* are *Multitudes* enticed the same Way, against the *Testimony* of *others*?

And partly their *own Convictions* too.

May I not appeal to Sinners themselves, as to their Delusion and Disappointment? Whatever they promis'd themselves in the commission of Sin, as to Pleasure or Advantage, how soon have they found that they grasp'd at a Shadow, embrac'd a Cloud? All vanished in the Enjoyment, that appear'd so big in the eager Pursuit. Upon which, something within might be heard to say with Regret: "Is this the great nothing I was so mad after? This the Empty Delight I have wearied my self for, &c.? And yet how often does the besotted Sinner, being enticed again, again consent; forget the Delusion, and still hold on, and where is like to be the End? *He feedeth of Ashes*, under the Appearance of Dainties, *a deceived Heart turning him aside, that he cannot deliver his Soul, nor say, is there not a Lie in my right Hand?* Which brings me to shew,

Isa. 44. 20.

III. What *Hardness* this tends to, and *they* are in danger of, *who* are drawn away by the Deceitfulness of Sin.

Hardness you know in its *Natural* Notion, as respecting Material Substances, denotes that *Property* whereby they withstand, and will not easily give way to the Touch. Whence in a *Moral* Sense, as spoken of the *Heart* in Man, to
which

which it is often ascrib'd, 'tis used to signify that stupid, insensible, obstinate Temper of Spirit, whereby Sinners are arm'd against any good Impressions to be made upon 'em. They are averse from Good, enclin'd to Evil, and difficultly yield to the Methods used to work a Change.

With this *wretched* Temper, in a sad Degree, we are all born into the World, as a Fruit of the *Primitive* Apostacy, and the Corruption that adheres to us from thence. A *Stone* in the *Heart* is our *Natural* Disease, and early manifests too great a Resistance against the Means of Cure.

But there is farther a *twofold* Hardness Sin leads unto; viz. *Habitual* and *Judicial*.

The *former* obstinate Sinners take the *direct Course* to bring upon themselves, and by the *same* provoke God righteously to give them up, and leave them under the *latter*.

I. *Habitual*. This is the Result of foregoing Transgression or repeated Acts of Sin, strengthening the Natural Depravity, and confirming in it. Hereby the Sinner is embolden'd in his Way, and become a Stranger to much of that Shame and Sorrow, Reluctancy and Remorse, which he was sometimes wont to feel.

Tho' by Natural Corruption the Heart is early prone and enclin'd to Sin, it can't be freely indulg'd at first, without the Checks and Rebukes of the Sinner's own Mind, especially in such as have had a *good Education*, and their Light encreas'd by Acquaintance with the Bible, and sitting under the Ministry of the Word.

When a Temptation is offer'd, there is a Conflict within, between Conscience and Corruption, and as has been well observed, much depends upon the Issue, on which side the Victory falls. Conscience enlightened would restrain from Sin by pulling off the Mask, bidding me view it in its Native Blackness and dreadful Consequence: And if I hearken to its Voice, and call in the Assistance of Grace, I am safe. On the other side the Carnal Heart pleads hard for Indulgence, under a favourable Disguise; and if I suf-

fer my self to be overcome, and yield to the Deceit, I am hence prepared to do it a *second* Time, and so *on*, 'till Custom in sinning has taken away the Sense of it, and the Heart becomes as the High-Way.

Eph. 2. 3.

The vicious *Desires of the Flesh and of the Mind* having carry'd the Day against our Fears and Scruples, grow more impetuous, and more likely to prevail another Time; whilst Conscience by Opposition is weakned and wasted, 'till at length its Voice is scarce heard, or little regarded, it's Authority over-ru'd, Convictions quench'd, and that *strange Stupidity* induc'd, that renders *past feeling*, under *which*, they that are thus far gone, are said to *give themselves over to work all manner of Uncleanness with Greediness*. Nothing almost so gross but such are ready to swallow with little Difficulty or Regret. Their Hearts no longer warn or smite them as heretofore; what Tendernefs they had is lost. They sin and sleep secure, as if incapable of any further Impression.

Eph. 4. 19.

And being thus *insensible*, they prove *inflexible* too: Are wedded to their Lusts, and will not admit a Divorce. Tho' the Law thunders they will not stir, tho' the Gospel allures they will not move. The Eternal God calls after them, but they will not hearken; the Redeemer invites, but they will not come; the Spirit may strive, but they still resist; whilst Patience waits they grow more wanton, and cause their Sins to abound because Grace does so. Thus from *hearkning to the Counsel of the ungodly*, how many advance to the *Scorners Chair*; where, from Principles of Atheism and Infidelity, they condemn the *Threatnings of the Bible* and *Promises* both, that they may not be brought to obey the *Commands*.

Psal. 1.

This is the *Habitual* Hardnefs Sin leads unto. And makes Way for,

2. That which is *Judicial*, which for wilful Disobedience God is sometimes provok'd to leave Men under.

If any will harden themselves, God in righteous Severity

rity may punish them with the same, suffer them to go on and continue so.

Not that he sets Men free to break his Law, or gives them Leave or Indulgence to fulfil their Lusts, as what he approv'd : * Much less does he encline their Hearts to Sin, by *infusing* or *suggesting* Evil to 'em. This is inconsistent with the spotless unchangable Purity of his Nature. *He cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth any Man to it.* No such *Darkness* can come from the *Father of Lights*. * See Mr. Shower of the Day of Grace. P. 44. James 1. 13.

But God may be said to *harden*, when he takes off from wilful Sinners the merciful Restraints they were before under, but still endeavour'd to break ; *when he no longer hedges up their way with thorns, or makes a wall to keep them from finding their destructive Paths ;* When he withdraws his forfeited Grace, or casts them out of the Protection of his Providence, leaving them to take their Course in Sin, and hasten to Hell without the means to stop or turn them, which they formerly enjoy'd : That they that are *filthy* and hate to be Reformed, should be *filthy* still : They that are *joyned to Idols*, and desperately say, *We have loved strangers, and after them we will go*, should be left to pursue their wicked Resolve to final Ruin : Such as wilfully oppose the Light, and against all the Principles of Reason and Scripture, take Evil for Good, Shadows for Realities ; prefer Sin to Holiness, Earth or Hell to Heaven, &c. should be *given over to a* † *Reprobate Mind*, incapable of making a better Choice : Conscience, as they desir'd and endeavour'd, should remain *Seared*, and the Holy Spirit retire and strive no more. Rev. 22. 11. Hosea 4. 17. Jer. 2. 25. Rom. 1. 28. † ἀδόκιμον. Injudicious, unteachable, &c.

This is a *possible* Case, and to which there are Instances of some that have been left for not yielding in Time to the Means of their Recovery. *But my People would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me ; so I gave them up to their own Hearts Lusts, and they walked in their own Counsels.* Fearful Judgment ! whither will not a *deceived* Heart and *seared* Conscience, under the Conduct of Impetuous Lusts, lead that Man who is thus forsaken and given

given up by God? which is what we have next to view, *Viz.*

IV. The *deplorable* Case of *those* with whom it is come to such a pass.

Two Considerations will evidence this.

1. *Should hardened Sinners die in their present state, they are lost for ever; and who knows but they may?*

It may make one tremble to think by how uncertain a Tenure, from abused Patience, they hold their Lives; how easily they are extinguished; what Innumerable Accidents may stop their Breath and dissolve the Union between Soul and Body, and that a *sudden* Death would send them *quick* to Hell. Their unholy Souls are unmeet for Heaven, their aggravated Guilt binds them over to Destruction, and if they go hence unchang'd, dying in their Sins, nothing remains to 'em but to *lie down in eternal sorrow*.

Jer. 13. 23.

2. *Their Recovery is very doubtful.*

The Prophet compares it to the *Ethiopian's changing his skin*, or the *Leopard his spots*; both in Nature impossible. They that are *habitually* hardened may be incurably so. Not that the Divine Spirit is not of Efficacy sufficient to reclaim the most vicious, convince and conquer the most In-
fensible and Rebellious: But when any will encourage themselves in Sin against his milder Motions, oppose his kind Design and provoke him to withdraw, what Assurance is there of his Return? What Cause to fear he may never exert that greater Force necessary to subdue their growing Obduracy, and rescue them from the Power of Corruption, which they voluntarily strengthen upon themselves? What Reason to tremble, lest he should suffer them to be *holden in the cords of their iniquity, and die without instruction*; and so *in the greatness of their folly for ever go astray*?

Prov. 5. 22.

All Hope, as to such, depends upon the Arbitrary Return of the Spirit of Grace, to which they have done despite, and by long Resistance quenched and sent griev'd away: And if he returns *no more*, their Recovery is no more

Prov. 2. 1.

pos-

possible, but their Perdition sure, and indeed like not to be far off. *He that being often reprov'd hardneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.* Pro. 29. 1.

Such a one having let go the Reins to Lust, drives on violently to Hell, and will speedily be at the End of his way.

Or should he be longer spared, it would but aggravate his Misery, as long as he continues to despise the Goodness and abuse the Patience and Forbearance of God; and instead of being led to Repentance after his hardness and impenitent Heart, treasurcth up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. So deplorable is the State and Work, so doubly miserable like to be the End of hardned ones! Rom. 2. 4, 5.

What remains is a brief Application for Instruction and Practice.

1. Is the Deceitfulness and Danger of Sin so great? Hence learn the Reason of that furious Storm that arises in the Breasts of true Penitents, when duly sensible of it. When with the Prodigal they are come to themselves, and seriously reflect, how little Sin ever did, or could do for 'em; what it would have depriv'd them of, and in the Issue betray'd them to; how long they follow'd its Charms, and how near they were to final Ruin——What Shame and Sorrow, what Abhorrence and Remorse, what Indignation and Revenge are kindled in 'em? Luke 15. 17.

They freely own themselves foolish, disobedient, deceived, whilst serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, and remember with Regret their exceeding Madness in that State. That ever I should hearken to the Enticements of Sin or Sinners, and with the Infinite Danger of losing my Soul, pursue a Shadow in the way to Hell: Lord! how foolish was I, and ignorant? I was as a Beast before thee. Tit. 3. 3.

They that set out with the highest Expectation, in any way of Wickedness, will shortly be brought to this by timely Repentance on Earth, or more furiously tear themselves in the Place of Torment, when too late convinc'd of the fatal Delusion. Psal. 73. 22.

2. Is the Deceitfulness of Sin so powerful and prevalent? *How adorable is the Divine Grace, as to those that escape and get safe to Heaven? What Joy will there be upon their Arrival?*

That I should be kept from being entangled, or timely rescu'd from the Snares of Death, when so strongly enticed, so powerfully drawn, so ready to yield, be overcome, hardned and lost: That Grace should interpose for my Security, and in the most endearing manner restrain, recover and preserve me to Glory—— With what Transports will this be told among the Inhabitants Above, as matter of Everlasting Wonder and Joy?

3. From this View of the Tendency of Sin, *it need no longer seem strange that holy Men run not with the ungodly to the same excess of riot, nor are free to follow a multitude, how great soever, to do evil; it being too dear a Compliment to run the hazard of being hardned first, and then damn'd for Company.*

And whatever Scorn or Violence they hereby incur, it will abundantly justify their Courage and Constancy, *to choose Affliction rather than Sin, not fearing any Evil in the Power of Man, in Comparison of the Wrath of God, nor accepting deliverance from Bodily Sufferings, when it can't be had but on sinful Compliances, to the greater Wrong and Danger of the Soul.*

4. Is there such a thing as being hardned in Sin? *How dreadful is their mistake, who whilst under the Power of, it think their Case good, because their Consciences are quiet? And with how many is it thus?*

The Sin that was once a Burden, and lay as a Mountain upon their Souls, they no longer feel or bewail; not that their Guilt is removed, but because their Sense is lost: And hereupon they bless themselves in their Hearts, and cry *Peace and Safety*, when *sudden Destruction* is coming upon them, for *there is no peace saith God to the wicked.*

They speak of it as a Privilege, that 'tis not with 'em as with some others, or as formerly with themselves. They are

are not follow'd and fill'd with Terrour and Concern upon the Account of Sin, and thro' fear of Death and Hell as once they were. Their sad Days and Nights are over, their Trouble laid, and all is easy and calm within. With this they please themselves and are *glad*, and *so*, as one says, is the Devil too, such stupidity fastning the Sinner in his Possession. But there is no Storm more dismal or dreadful than such a Calm; no Pain but is preferable to such Ease; no Trouble but is rather to be chosen than such Mad Joy. And indeed the *false* Peace Sinners thus cherish, must ere long be broken and exchang'd for deep and serious Sorrow, preparatory to Rest and Joy upon a better Bottom, if ever God recover and have Compassion upon their Souls: And without *this*, there is not a sadder Sight upon Earth, than to see a hardned Wretch going out of the World *quiet* and *secure*, from a groundless *Hope*, which the next Moment must be utterly dash'd and turn'd into Everlasting *Despair*. *What is the hope of the Hypocrite — when God taketh away his Soul?* Job 27. 2.

5. Is the Deceitfulness of Sin so dangerous and destructive? Hence *learn your Privilege in the Gospel, and thankfully improve it*. Here you are warn'd of its Subtlety, and Arm'd against it; told what is Sin, and your Danger by it, and whither it tends; and have proper Remedies provided for your Security. *While you have the Light, walk agreeably to it, and receive not the Grace of God in vain.* John 12. 35. 2 Cor. 6. 1.

Was I benighted in a Howling Wilderness, where are a Thousand *By-Paths*, which however seemingly smooth and pleasant, lead to some dangerous Precipice, or dreadful Gulf, that had prov'd fatal to Multitudes before me, how thankful should I be for a Light and faithful Guide which I might safely follow? But how infinitely greater Reason have I to be thankful to my God, that whilst in a World of Snares, lying in Wickedness, fill'd with Darkness, surrounded with Death; I have *the word of his lips* Psal. 119. 4. *to keep me from the path of the destroyer*, and his Son to be

the *Captain* of my *Salvation*, to conduct me in his own Way to Glory.

Isa. 119. 9.

Isa. 30. 21.

Wherewithal should a *Young Man* cleanse his way, but by taking heed thereto, according to *God's Word*? How far should we wander, did he not hereby call after us, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*. And when milder Counsels will not do, how merciful is that Roughness by which he will soundly awaken and pluck any as *Brands* out of the *Burning*? The most terrible Threatnings of the Word set home by the *Divine Spirit* to the wounding of *Ours*: The closest Admonitions and sharpest Reproofs, the most pungent and painful Convictions of Conscience, and Rebukes of Providence, Afflictions without, and Pressures within, &c. in order to this, are all the Effects of real Kindness and Compassion, at which there is no Reason to fret, as making for our greatest Advantage. And how grievous soever the Severity may seem to diseased Nature, Grace will teach the Recover'd Sinner with Thankfulness to own the Favour and Faithfulness of his Heavenly Physician, by such a Course to save him from so great a Death as being hardened and lost thro' the Deceitfulness of Sin. Blessed be God for those Wounds and Groans that were the Means of my Safety, Life and Joy.

6. Is the Case so dreadful of being finally hardened in Sin, as leading to Perdition? Hence I infer the Happiness of such as are in Covenant with God, having chosen him in Christ for theirs, and given up themselves unto him. They are become his special Charge as well as peculiar Delight, and shall never perish by being deceived or pluck'd out of his Hand.

Heaven is the Place they are ordained to, redeemed and preparing for, have a special Promise of; and hence may comfortably conclude they shall be preserv'd from whatever would prove a Bar to their Admission there, as a State of Hardness and final Impenitency would do.

Wherefore, how potent and prevalent soever Sin's Deceitfulness may be, the Divine Grace shall be always sufficient

cient for 'em. By this they shall be enabled to stand their Ground, or if they fall, be renew'd by Repentance and rise again, made more humble and watchful, and by begging and being furnish'd with fresh Strength from Christ, overcome in the End.

Tho' the Children of God are not presently to be taken out of the World, from all Trials and Temptations in it; the *Request* which their Blessed Lord hath put up for 'em shall assuredly be heard, as to their being kept *John 17. 15.* from the destructive Evil.

God who is of Infinite Power, unerring Wisdom, unquestionable Faithfulness and unchangable Love, is *their God for ever and ever*; and his Perfections are all engag'd for their Security: So that he will be their *Guide even unto Death*, and they shall never finally miscarry. *Psal. 48. ult.*

How great is the Happiness of such a State, that in the midst of strong Temptations, surrounding Snares, Deceitful Lusts, &c. all lying in wait for my Soul; I have a God in near Alliance with me, to whose Protection I am entitled, to whose Throne of Grace I have free Access in every Time of need; and am there encouraged to plead with him on this peculiar Ground, *Lord, I am thine*, *Psal. 119. 94.* save me.

7thly and Lastly, To bring down the Matter to Practice. Is the Case so sad, the Issue so fearful, which Sin by a powerful Deceit would train unto? *Let the force of the Consideration of this be seen in your strict Watch over your selves, and serious Exhortation as to one another, against the Evil which all are in so much Danger by.*

You my Brethren, Encouragers of the Lecture here, as a Religious Society, Let HOLINESS TO THE LORD, be your General Inscription, and labour to promote it, as to every Individual, *Looking diligently, lest any of you* *Heb. 12. 15.* *fail of the Grace of God; lest any Root of Bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many are defiled, and the Divine Presence forfeited. Holiness becomes God's House* *Psal. 93. 5.* *for ever: And without it none can acceptably serve him* *Heb. 12. 14.* here, or see him Above.

Let *Love* to God and Souls inspire you with a tender Concern for his Glory and your common Salvation, and shew it by mutual Care to preserve or rescue each other from the Deceitfulness of Sin. You know whither it tends.

Rom. 10. 1. *My Hearts Desire and Prayer to God for you all is, that you may be saved*; and herein I doubt not you concur with me, and *within* your own Sphere will faithfully endeavour it. And as nothing but Sin can *separate between you and your God*, let no Place be found among you for that *abominable thing* which he declares *He hates*, that you may also abhor, and have nothing to do with it. *Be Followers* of God, and as you are all professedly tending towards *his Rest*, be solicitous that none of your Company miscarry, or *seem to come short*. With what Joy may you say to one another, *Come let us go into the House of the Lord*, to pray, and hear, and worship him together *now*, when you can do it under the View and Hope of meeting ere long in the Kingdom of your Father, to be united in the Blissful Enjoyment of Him for ever?

As a Society of *Younger* Persons, especially apprehend your selves concern'd to take all Occasions to engage, and fix each other for God and Holiness, against the Deceitfulness of Sin, in its various Forms.

Now is the *Time* of your greatest Danger and of Satan's Hopes, and all you can do is no more than needs, to your common Safety, considering the Enemy with which you have to deal, the Evil against which you are to guard, its manner of Working, and the Issue it means.

The Devil has his Agents endeavouring to propagate Sin and ruin Souls, and their principal Attempts are upon *Younger Ones*, as in the *ductile* Age. To such therefore Christ particularly calls, *My Son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not*. They will be ready to do so in *Numbers*, and by *all* the Arts of *Address* and *Insinuation* that may be like to move. And why should any be more forward to destroy, than you to save one another? If any after the Example of the Prince of Darkness, are not content to go
to

to Hell alone, but seek to draw others after them, with what Zeal should the *Followers* of Christ, Members of the same Society counteract the *Serpent's Seed*, and help on each other in the Way to Heaven?

Your Labour of Love as to this, you have no Reason to think shall be forgotten or lost. There has been a Time when *they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him.* — And how encouraging is it to read it added as to such, *They shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up my Jewels?* Mal. 3. 16.

In Hope of *this*, as you profess to *fear the Lord in your Youth*, act as such. Be not ashamed to speak of and for him to one another, to keep his Way, and avoid the contrary, and never turn aside into the Paths of Death.

In a Sense of the deceitful working and dreadful Tendency of Sin, *will you not from this Time*, even all this Society as one, and with one Voice, *cry unto God, my Father, thou art the Guide of my Youth?* Jer. 3. 4. And having chosen him to be so, go on to *ask the Way to Zion with your Faces thither-* Jer. 50. 5. *ward*, and strengthen, encourage and comfort one another as you go, saying, *Come and let us joyn our selves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten.*

If any *after hopeful Beginnings* should *now* decline and gradually depart from the Living God, having none *seasonably* to counsel, in Order to stop and bring him back; How far may he run? How difficult and doubtful may his Recovery prove? How certain, and deep, and unexpressible his Misery, if never restored? And what should you not be willing to do, that this may never be the Case of any of you?

On the contrary, having your Hearts first set *right* with God, and then duly assisting each other to flee from Sin, and walk in Holiness and Righteousness before him; Doing this in your Youth, and holding on against all the Temptations of your *State* and Day, &c. What Honour will you hereby bring to God? What Credit to the Gospel?

pel? What Advantage to others, and to your own Souls?

How much a *Blessing* will your Society be on Earth? With what *Comfort* may you hear and find at last, that you helped to fill Heaven?

Isa. 43. 21.

Of how great USE and Influence may your Example prove? With what a Lustre will you shine? What happy Attainments be like to reach in the Things that accompany Salvation? And by growing Grace, preparatory to greater Glory, appear to be some of those whom the Most High is *forming for himself*, in both Worlds, *to shew forth his Praise*.

Wherefore, as you regard the Glory of God, the Interest of the Redeemer in Opposition to Sin and Satan, the highest Welfare of your Society, and of every one belonging to it: As you would have the Satisfaction of seeing Religion flourish while you live, and provide for a peaceful Death, a comfortable Account, and so an abundant Entrance into the Joy of your Lord; *Exhort one another*.

Eccles. 9. 10.

Do this with Meekness and Wisdom, Faithfulness and Affection, Seriousness, Diligence and Application. *Daily, while it is called to Day*. Remember you are *dying*, and so are they you are related to. In a Sense of which *whatsoever thy Hand findeth to do, do it with all thy Might, for there is no Work, nor Wisdom, nor Knowledge, nor Counsel in the Grave whither you are going*. Exhort one another *daily* while it is called *to Day*. It must be *now or never*.

And as you would manifest a real Concern for the Welfare of any *other*, be not negligent of your *own*.

2 Tim 2. 22.

1 Pet. 2. 11.

Now in the Prime of your Days, *Flee Youthful Lusts, that war against the Soul*: And let no Sin be admitted under the most favourable Disguise, its Method being thus to deceive, in Order to destroy.

If there be any that have engaged in any Way of Wickedness, how should they be struck with Fear, and proceed no further, lest the next Step set them beyond Recovery?

You

You that by merciful Restraints have been hitherto kept back, thankfully own the Divine Goodness, and always abide under the Protection of Heaven. Remember the Worth of a Soul, and let none here be easily betray'd, by taking a Serpent into your Bosom for its *pleasing Colours*, without any Regard to its *Mortal Sting*.

Consider where your *Danger* and Sin's *Power* lies, and use all Means timely to preserve you from its hardning destructive Deceit.

For your Help herein let me mention a few Things by Way of *Counsel* and *Direction*, and so draw to a Close.

First, *Begin at the Root*. See that Corruption as to its Power and Reign be mortify'd within. Get by Faith into Union with Christ, that you may be made Partakers of his Spirit, to *dwell* and abide in and with you, to enable you to *put off the Old Man which is corrupt according to deceitful Lusts*, and whereby you may *be renewed in the Spirit of your Mind*; Have a new and Holy Disposition wrought, the old Nature throughout sanctify'd and chang'd, and so *put on that new Man, which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness*. Ephes. 4. 22. 23. 24.

Without this we cannot be safe. Tho' Gospel Light and Knowledge may work an external Reformation, and restrain for a Time from grosser Pollutions; Nothing short of a *Divine Nature* can be of constant Security against the saddest Instances of Sins prevailing Deceit, or our effectual *escaping the Corruption that is in the World thro' Lust*. 2 Pet. 2. 20. 1 Pet. 1. 4.

Secondly, *Maintain a due Fear and Tendernefs of Conscience as to the least Sin*.

Indeed think no Sin *little*. Remember how great, how good a God 'tis committed against: What a righteous Law 'tis a Violation of, what an everlasting Hell it deserves, and without Repentance and an Interest in the Blood of Jesus, what an immortal Soul it damns: And let the least Motion or Sollicitation thereto, be rejected with Abhorrence and speedily quench'd. Avoid the Company of those *Fools who make a Mock of it*. Prov. 14. 9.

Thirdly,

Thirdly, *Beware of running upon Temptation in a vain Presumption you may come off safe.*

Consider your Strength lies not in your selves, but must come from Heaven, and you have no Promise of Protection out of God's Way. He may justly leave you if you leave him, and venturing to try Conclusions on the weak Supports of Nature, 'tis more than probable you are overcome. *Happy is the Man that feareth alway.*

Fourthly, *Keep the Cross of Christ as much as possible in View, and remember 'twas Sin that nailed him to it. He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities.* Think of his bitter Sufferings, his dying Love; and what Heart can you have to venture upon *that* which cost your dear Redeemer his Life? When in the greatest Danger from the Deceitfulness of Sin, a serious Look at a Crucified Jesus would be of Use to break the powerful Charm, and keep you safe. What Vail can hide its horrid Aspect, or render it tolerable to one that reads by Faith its Nature and Desert, in the Wounds, and Blood, and Death of Christ.

Fifthly, *Be not unmindful to renew your Covenant with God, and often reflect upon it with Approbation:* That when ever tempted or enticed to Sin, you may be able readily to answer, *I have opened my Mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back. Thy Vows are upon me O God. Truly I am thy Servant, I am thy Servant, devoted to thy Fear;* in opposition to the Practice and Allowance of all Sin, and I desire and resolve to be always so.

You that in the Vigour of your Youth are entring upon a Stage of Action in the World, in an Age of abounding Corruption and Temptation had need very solemnly to do this; and having bound your selves to be the Lords, rest not in your Promises to him, but in his to you, in which all your Safety lyes, and from whence all your Comfort is to spring: And so *in well doing commit the keeping of your*

your Souls unto him, as to a faithful Creator and tender Father; the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and yours. 1 Pet. 4. 19.

Sixthly, *Endeavour to live under an Awful Sense of the Divine Presence with you, as a powerful Means to your Preservation.*

How watchful should I be from the serious Consideration, that wherever I am, I am under the all seeing Eye of God, which pierces into my *Thoughts* and *Ways*, and makes a strict Observation of *both*, and *this* in Order to an *Account* hereafter to be given to Him, as my *final Judge*?

Shall I then dare to sin in the very Face of Heaven, and suffer my self to be overcome by a Fallacy, which will never pass for an Excuse with him who sees all Things as they are, and *will not be mock'd*, how willing soever I may be to be *deceiv'd*?

Would I not repel the Temptation, suppress Corruption, and reject the Bait if I saw him present? And is he ever the less so, tho' not under the View of an Eye of Sense? *How then can I do this great Wickedness and sin* Gen. 39. 9: *God?* Whilst he *stands by* and takes Notice of all.

Seventhly, *Get your Minds richly furnished, and a Conscience well instructed from the Word of God; and charge it to be faithful, and hearken to its Voice.*

Take heed of rebelling against the Light. Wilful sinning makes sad Havock in the Soul, and is the Highway to Obduracy and Destruction.

Eighthly, *Frequently call your selves to an Account.* That if you have been enabled to stand, you may bless God, and be encouraged to keep his Way, depending on his Presence and Grace to your continu'd Preservation. Wherein you have fail'd, you may be sensible of your *first Declensions*, and how occasion'd, and presently *turn your feet unto God's Testimonies* more closely to walk with him. Psal. 119. 59.

Take heed of *lesser Failures*, if you would be safe. The Beginnings of Sin may be most hopefully resisted; but like

a slight Disease, will prove dangerous in the Neglect, and threaten Death.

Wherefore, be not Strangers to the Work of Examination, as to Heart and Life. The ** oftner* you look into both the *better*, in order to rectify what shall be found amiss. *More* are undone, and in a *worse* Sense, by neglecting to review their *State and Course*, than by omitting to cast up their *Books*. And thus whilst they put off the Search, Sin gains upon 'em by insensible Degrees to the Ruin of their Souls. See that this be none of your Case.

Ninthly *Inure your selves to a Life of Self Denial, as to the Flesh and the World*, and you will be in less Danger of being overcome by the Deceitfulness of Sin, to gratify the *one*, or gain the *other*.

Sin's prevailing Temptations are from the Body and the Objects of Sense: But how little will ** all that is in the World, the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life* signify to *one*, that being in Christ *† hath crucified the Flesh with the Affections and Lusts*; and by his Cross can say as the Apostle, *|| The World is crucified unto me and I unto the World*. Its Profits, Pleasures and Prejudgments I can easily spare, and reject it all as a dead, undesirable, hated Thing; when offer'd as the Price of my Destruction, to draw off my Heart from God and Holiness to Sin.

Tenthly *Preserve upon your Hearts the lively Apprehensions of Death and Judgment, as sure and approaching*, and the Charms of Sin will lose their Force.

This is that which gives Sin its Advantage over us all, *† Gal. 6. 14.* *Let us not forget our latter End* or set it at the greatest

* The close of every Week, of every Day, besides other proper Seasons would not be too much for this.

Pythagoras tho
a Heathen ad-
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and over to re-
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ons of the day.
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Pupils, in na-
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Christian to ask
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sed? What at

Id ne? w-a Du-
ry b-on b-e-
-mit ed?

* Joh. 2 16.

†G 1 v 25.

|| Ga. 6 14.

live to the *next*, or not die before Night? We see or hear of Thousands that do *so*, younger than our selves.

Now therefore often admit the serious Thoughts of the Change you are to make you know not how soon, and what is to be consequent upon it. And who would be *sinning* when he is *dying*? Offending God when going to appear before Him; to give an Account of all that he has done in the Body, and be adjudg'd to endless Joy or Misery?

Take heed of losing your Seriousness in Excess of Carnal Mirth: Forget not your Liableness to this in the *House* Eccles. 7. 2. of Feasting, nor the Advantage of going to the House of Mourning, there to learn the End of all Men, and lay it to Heart. Improve the Sickness and Death of others, to awaken and impress the deeper Sense of your own as at hand: And in that Sense, labour to stand at that Distance from Sin that becomes Persons waiting for their Lord. Luke 12. 36.

Lastly, Make your constant serious Application to Heaven for Wisdom to discover, and Grace to withstand the Deceitfulness of Sin.

Plead with the Almighty with an Earnestness and Affection suitable to your Danger. 'Lord! never leave me
' whilst in this World of Snares; suffer me not to be de-
' ceived, overcome, hardened and lost Be thou my Sun
' and my Shield, hold me by thy Mighty Arm, guide me
' by thy Counsel, even unto Death, and afterward receive me Psal. 73. 24.
' to Glory.

Thus let your Watch be kept up, your Suit continu'd; never think your selves past all Danger 'till you come to Heaven: Where your Salvation shall be perfected, Fear and Sin excluded, and your prayers turn'd into Thanksgiving and Praise to all Eternity. Now unto him that is Jude 24. 25. able to keep you from falling, and present you faultless before the Presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy to the only wise God our Saviour, be Glory and Dominion now and for ever. Amen.

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